

VZCZCXYZ0003
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHC #8213 0532238
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 222234Z FEB 08
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 0000
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0000

S E C R E T STATE 018213

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2018

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DISCUSSING FOREIGN FIGHTERS WITH THE SYRIANS

Classified By: NEA A/S C. David Welch for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (U) This is an action request; please see paragraph three.

SUMMARY

[¶2.](#) (S) Department requests Embassy Damascus provide the Syrian government information on foreign terrorist flows through Syria into Iraq derived from Objective Massey documents and detailed in an Intelligence Community-cleared presentation (forwarded to Post separately). Department requests Embassy Damascus urge the SARG to take steps to disrupt Syria-based foreign terrorist facilitator networks and to prevent foreign terrorists from transiting Syria to Iraq. End summary.

OBJECTIVES

[¶3.](#) (S/REL SARG) Embassy Damascus should pursue the following objectives:

-- Convey to host government that the USG views the flow of foreign terrorists into Iraq as a direct threat to U.S. and Iraqi security.

-- Note that the vast majority of suicide attacks against Iraqi civilians, coalition forces, and Iraqi security forces are conducted by foreign terrorists who enter Iraq from Syria.

-- Share with host government the information obtained from Objective Massey documents emphasizing the overwhelming number of foreign terrorists who entered Iraq through Syria. The IC-cleared presentation forwarded to Post provides information releasable to the SARG.

-- Explain that this information has been shared with the governments whose citizens comprise the largest number of foreign terrorists operating in Iraq, and that these countries are working with the United States to try to stop the travel of their citizens to Iraq to join the insurgency.

-- Note that despite repeated expressions of U.S. and Iraqi concern about the flow of foreign terrorists and insurgents through Syria, the SARG has not cooperated sufficiently with neighboring and regional governments to identify and stop terrorists transiting Syria into Iraq.

-- Explain that the Syrian Government is responsible for what happens on Syrian soil, and remind the SARG that the UN Security Council has passed multiple resolutions requiring Iraq's neighbors to take steps to prevent the destabilization of Iraq.

-- Explain that the United States expects Syria to take immediate additional measures to confront the flow of foreign terrorists through Syria into Iraq, and to eliminate the foreign terrorist facilitation networks that operate within Syria. These measures include:

1A. Further enhance border security measures to stop smuggling and illicit transit.

1B. Implement stringent visa requirements for all foreigners entering Syria, including Arab citizens.

1C. Increase monitoring of suspected foreign terrorists inside Syria.

1D. Identify Syrian nationals recruited by AQI and arrest them before they transit into Iraq. Extradite as appropriate these individuals to the Government of Iraq or source countries for detention, interrogation, and prosecution.

1E. Increase information sharing and cooperation with key foreign terrorist origin and transit countries, as well as with the Government of Iraq.

-- Provide host government with a list of foreign terrorist facilitators known to be in Syria (list forwarded to Post separately) and urge immediate SARG action to identify and arrest those individuals, disrupt their efforts to transport terrorists into Iraq or provide material support. Further insist those individuals be made accessible to the Government of Iraq and/or other appropriate governments for interrogation and possible prosecution.

-- Inform the SARG that we have information that the Syrian Government allows Al Qaeda terrorist facilitators to operate within Syria and impress upon the SARG that we will hold them fully accountable for the activities of these facilitators and the terrorists they send into Iraq, Lebanon, or elsewhere.

REPORTING DEADLINE

14. (SBU) Post is requested to deliver demarche and report by cable as soon as possible once Post has received the list of foreign terrorist facilitators known to be in Syria.

BACKGROUND

15. (S) During a September operation in Salah ad-Din province, Coalition Forces secured hundreds of documents on terrorists who entered Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007. These documents showed that most of the fighters came from Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Yemen, and that the vast majority used facilitation networks in Syria to enter Iraq. Since this operation, the flow of terrorists into Iraq has decreased, partly due to Coalition and Iraqi operations inside Iraq, increased regional cooperation between governments, and increased security measures taken by the Syrian Government. However, foreign terrorists, primarily affiliated with Al Qaeda in Iraq, continue to enter Iraq and are often responsible for large-scale attacks against Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition forces, and innocent Iraqi civilians. While the SARG has taken some steps to confront certain Syria-based terrorists, the Syrian government must take additional measures, such as implementing a visa requirement for entry into Syria and increasing border patrols along the shared Syria-Iraq border.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶6. (U) Please contact NEA/ELA Syria Desk Officer Allison Monz at 202-647-1131 or via e-mail MonzAM@state.sgov.gov for any further background information.

RICE